PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in February 2009

GARFIELD PARK FIELDHOUSE

(Originally West Park Commission Administration Building)
100 N. Central Park Ave.

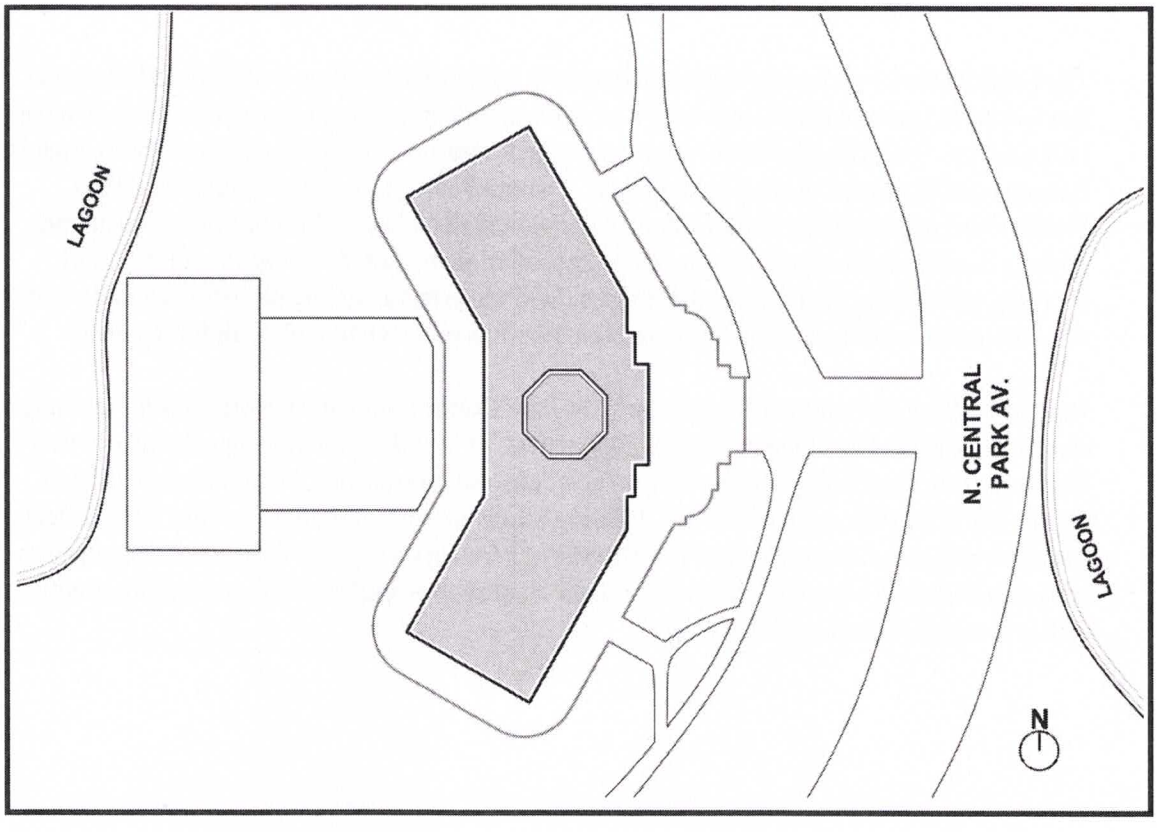
Built: 1928
Architects: Michaelsen & Rognstad

Chicago's distinctive park buildings, with their exceptional architectural designs and fine craftsmanship, are notable structures in the City's neighborhoods. The Garfield Park Fieldhouse—known to thousands of Chicagoans as the "Gold Dome Building" for its distinctive gold-leaf dome towering over Garfield Park—is a dramatic visual landmark for the surrounding Garfield Park neighborhood.

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse is an architecturally impressive building in the Spanish Baroque Revival style, unusual in the context of Chicago's architectural history as well as for the Chicago Park District. This visually flamboyant style uses decorative details drawn from historic Spanish Baroque and Spanish Colonial architecture. Characteristic of the style, the Garfield Park Fieldhouse has a richly decorated entrance pavilion with twisted columns, portrait busts and sculptures, and other ornamentation including scallop shells, scrolls, pinnacles, niches, and swirling, naturalistic plant forms. Inside, the Fieldhouse has an ornate two-story rotunda with a colorful patterned terrazzo floor and marble-clad walls punctuated with sculptural panels.

Built in 1928 as the headquarters for the West Park Commission, the Garfield Park Fieldhouse represents a period in Chicago's history when the City's parks were managed by nearly two dozen separate park commissions before their consolidation as the Chicago Park District in 1934. The West Park Administration Building's conversion to a fieldhouse after 1934 reflects the changing cultural attitudes towards the role of parks in Chicago in the twentieth century as park administrators created and renovated park landscapes and buildings to encourage active, rather than passive, recreational uses.

The aerial photo (right) shows the T-shaped plan of Garfield Park within the larger context of the West Side neighborhood of the same name. The West Park Administration Building (now the Garfield Park Fieldhouse), indicated with circle, is located on Central Park Avenue between the east and west lagoons. The drawing (below) illustrates the building's site plan. The shaded portion is the orignal 1928 fieldhouse; the T-shaped extension on the west side of the building is a later 1983 gymnasium and pool addition.



The entrance of the Garfield Park Fieldhouse (above) faces N. Central Park Avenue. The building was designed in 1928 as the headquarters for the West Park Commission. In 1934 the city's various park commissions were consolidated into the Chicago Park District, and the building was then adapted to serve as a fieldhouse.

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse became familiar to Chicagoans as the "Gold Dome Building" for its distinctive gold-leafed dome (left), a dramatic visual landmark in the surrounding neighborhood.

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse is the work of Michaelsen and Rognstad, who served as the architects for the West Park Commission from 1927 to 1929, a brief but especially productive period in the history of Chicago's west parks. During this time, the firm produced twelve distinctive park buildings as part of an ambitious $10 million improvement program for the parks and boulevards on Chicago's West Side. The firm is also noteworthy for other Chicago buildings, especially the On Leong Merchants Association Building, a remarkable Chinese-style structure in Chinatown and a designated Chicago Landmark.

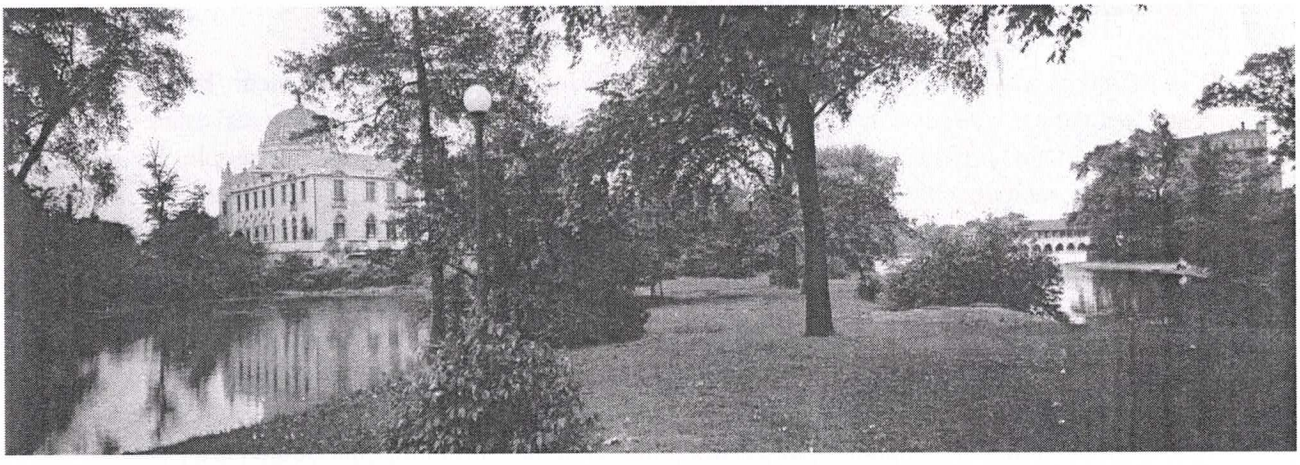
Park Development in Chicago and the West Parks Commission

Park development in Chicago displays a rich variety of traditions. In the first half of the nineteenth century, in an effort to attract residential development to newly-platted residential neighborhoods, private real estate developers set aside small tracts of land for parks. The first of these parks, Washington Square, was given to the City in 1842 by the American Land Company, which was subdividing the surrounding Near North Side area. Other parks acquired in the next 30 years by the city through gifts of land from developers included Union Park and Vernon Park on Chicago's West Side and Ellis Park on the South Side. These parks were relatively modest in size and intended for strolling and passive recreation by nearby residents. In overall form and use, they resembled the small "squares" found both in European cities as well as in older American cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York.

The value of parks as enhancements to real estate development and civic life continued to be recognized in the years after the Civil War. In 1869 the Illinois State legislature established three new governmental agencies to oversee the development and maintenance of new parks in Chicago: the South, West, and Lincoln Park Commissions. The creation of the three commissions brought about the enhancement of the already-created Lincoln Park on the city's north lakefront and the development of five additional large parks, connected by landscaped boulevards, on the city's West and South sides. One of these parks, Garfield Park, would be the location for the Garfield Park Fieldhouse.

These parks—Lincoln, Humboldt, Garfield, Douglas, Washington, and Jackson Parks—were designed as large-scale "pastoral" landscapes of picturesque meadows, encircling woodlands, curvilinear ponds and meandering bridal paths. These designs reflect several influences including the naturalistic English landscape design tradition of the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century development of large, park-like cemeteries such as Chicago's Graceland Cemetery, and the design and construction of New York's Central Park.

Situated near handsome middle- and upper-income neighborhoods, Chicago's great nineteenth-century parks were destinations for Chicago's citizens. Strolling, horseback riding, and carriage rides were popular ways of experiencing the parks. Pastoral parks such as these were regarded as the "lungs" of the city, offering refuge from the city's urban and industrial character by providing places for relaxation and contemplation of nature. In an increasingly class-oriented society, city parks were also seen as cultivators of culture and democracy.



Originally developed from 1869-1874 as a large-scale "pastoral" park, Garfield Park was a popular place for Chicagoans to promenade and escape from the tensions of the crowded city. The park's picturesque landscape featured sweeping lawns, winding paths and scenic lagoons, as shown in these early twentieth-century views. The Garfield Park Fieldhouse is visble at the left side of the bottom photo.

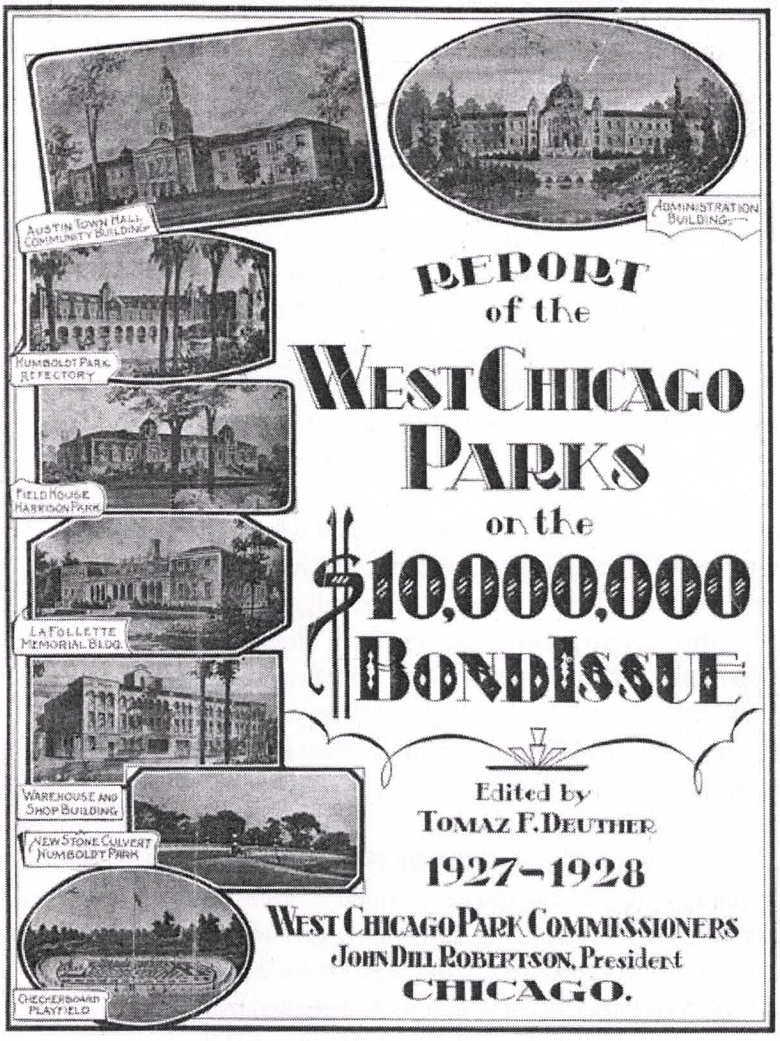
These themes continued to influence Chicago's park development in the early twentieth century. In addition to large pastoral parks, progressive-era social reformers such as architect Dwight Perkins and sociologist Charles Zueblin advocated the creation of a greater number of smaller neighborhood parks more accessible to Chicago's immigrant and working class populations. Progressive reformers in this period also believed that parks should accommodate more active forms of physical recreation, such as swimming, gymnastics, ball playing, and supervised play. In 1904, a report from the Special Park Commission called for the creation of numerous neighborhood parks throughout the city. The first neighborhood parks, led by the 1900 construction of McKinley Park, were built on Chicago's South and Southwest Sides by the South Park Commission and were hailed for their innovative social programs and designs. Soon the Lincoln Park and West Park Commissions followed suit.

At the heart of these neighborhood parks was a new institutional building—the "fieldhouse." As this building type had never existed before, there were no specific models for designers to follow. The result was that the overall architectural appearance of the fieldhouse varied among the park commissions, but the programmatic elements were similar. Loosely based on settlement house buildings, park fieldhouses were intended to become the focus of activity in neighborhood parks, accommodating activities as varied as drama, English classes, and weight-lifting. The fieldhouses contained assembly halls and club rooms, indoor gymnasiums and locker rooms. They often had libraries and lunchrooms, and in some cases there was an outdoor swimming pool, either as part of the building complex or located with shower rooms in another section of the park.

The Development of Garfield Park

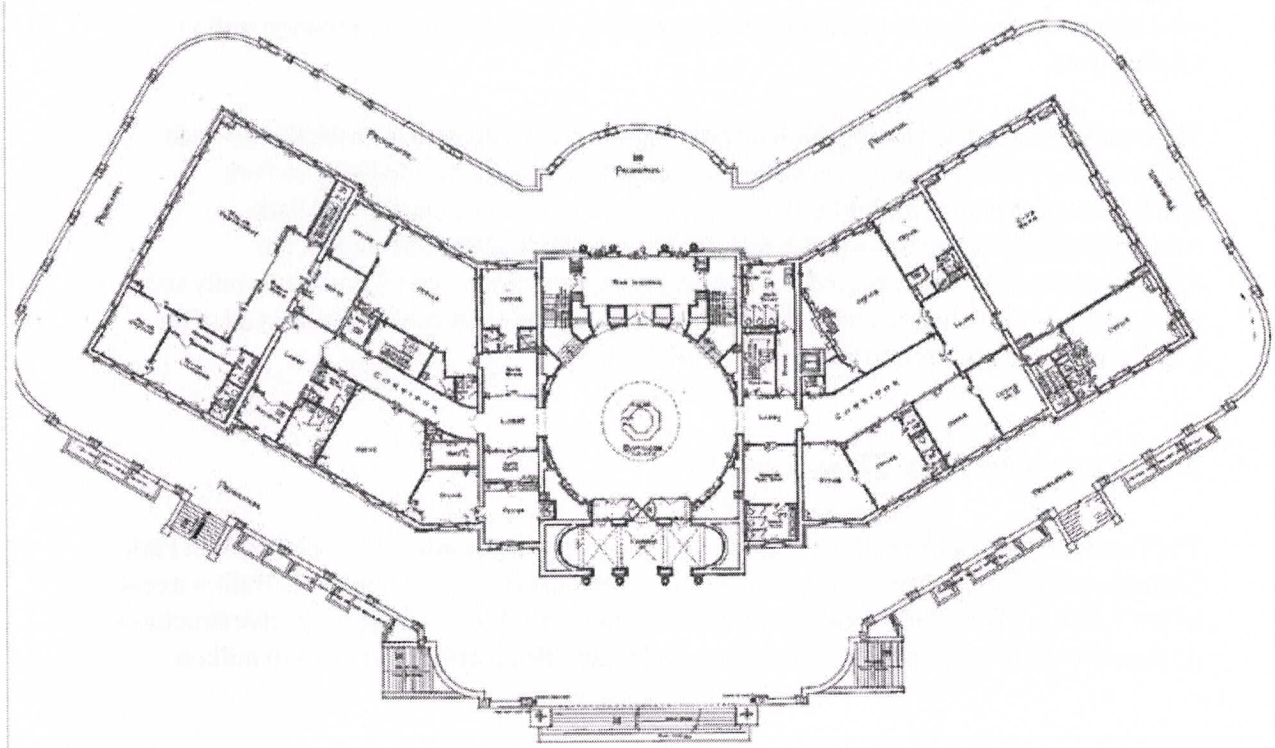
Garfield Park's history reflects several of these trends in Chicago park development. Its establishment as a large-scale "pastoral" park was meant to both enhance nearby real estate development and provide passive recreational opportunities for large numbers of people. Its later history, including the conversion of the West Park Administration Building into today's Garfield Park Fieldhouse, reflects the changing emphasis in parks towards active recreation and organized activities.

Garfield Park was conceived in 1869 as the centerpiece of the newly established West Park System. (Originally called Central Park, it was renamed in 1881 in honor of recently assassinated President James A. Garfield.) In addition to Garfield Park, the West Park System included two other large parks—North Park (later renamed Humboldt) and South Park (which became Douglas)—along with boulevards linking the three parks. The West Park Commission began to assemble the property occupied by Garfield Park in 1869. Five years later the 185-acre park took its final shape between the East and West Garfield Park neighborhoods on Chicago's West Side. The T-shaped site is bounded by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad



This illustrated report (left) was published by the West Park Commission following a brief but ambitious building campaign between 1927 and 1929. The Garfield Park Administration Building was the centerpiece of the $10 million program under which twelve buildings were constructed, including fieldhouses for both Humboldt and Douglas Parks.

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse original first-floor plan (below) for the administrative headquarters of the West Park Commission. In addition to the commission's offices, the building included spaces for the park police and a courtroom. The entrance rotunda under the dome is the round space at the center.



track on the north, Fifth Avenue on the south, Hamlin Boulevard on the west, and Central Park Avenue on the east. The central portion of its eastern border extends to Homan Avenue.

Garfield Park was originally designed by William Le Baron Jenney, the Architect and Chief Engineer for the West Park System, as a picturesque landscape in the English naturalistic manner, featuring lagoons, sweeping lawns, winding lanes and broad vistas. People came from all areas of Chicago during the summer months to rent boats or relax on the many benches facing the east and west lagoons. Thus, Garfield Park provided passive recreation for Chicagoans who wished to promenade or simply escape from the pressures of the crowded city.

Garfield Park was substantially redesigned in a second phase of development when Jens Jensen was hired as the West Park Commission's new General Superintendent and Chief Landscape Architect in 1905. Jensen was an innovative landscape designer who promulgated a new American landscape style inspired by the Midwestern prairie. Garfield Park, along with Humboldt and Douglas Parks, were redesigned with plantings native to Illinois landscape. In all three parks, Jensen reduced the size of the lagoons and replaced some of their acreage with prairie meadows. He also introduced Prairie School architecture into the West Parks, hiring noted architects to design buildings and structures in the style.

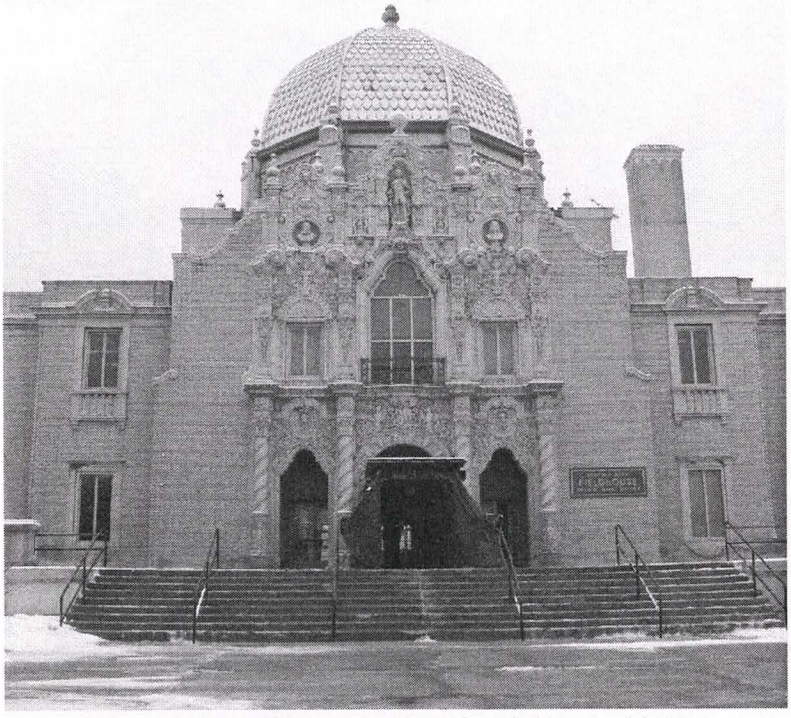
The last phase in Garfield Park's historic development occurred in the 1920s when the West Park Commission undertook a building campaign, the centerpiece of which was the Administration Building for the Commission itself. The building campaign began with the approval of a $10 million bond issue by voters on June 6, 1927. In the next two years, twelve new buildings were erected at various West Side parks, all of which were designed by the firm of Michaelson and Rognstad. Humboldt and Douglas Parks each received a new fieldhouse, while the new Administration Building was erected for the West Park Commission staff in Garfield Park.

The buildings completed during this later building campaign departed from the Prairie-style structures built during Jens Jensen's administration. The Humboldt and Douglas Park fieldhouses were built in a modified Georgian Revival style, while the Garfield Park Administration Building was a lavish Spanish Baroque Revival-style structure. The Administration Building was used as the West Park Commission's headquarters for only six years before being converted into a fieldhouse following the 1934 consolidation of all of the City's park commissions into the Chicago Park District.

Building and Site Description

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse was constructed in 1928 as the headquarters for the West Park Commission, which had previously operated out of small offices in Union Park. Built at a cost of $657,216, the West Park Commission Administration Building was one of twelve structures designed by architects Christian Michaelsen and Sigurd Rognstad as part of a $10 million

This aerial photograph from 1941 (left) illustrates the Garfield Park Fieldhouse's location on axis with Washington Boulevard (from the top middle edge of the photo), and Central Park Avenue (from the right edge of the photo). Approaching the park from either street, the building's gold dome is a prominent visual feature from several blocks away.



The central pavilion of the east elevation (above) with its exuberant "Churrigueresque" terra-cotta entrance portal and immense gold-leaf dome. The symmetrical wings on either side of the central pavilion are clad in cream-colored face brick laid in a distinctive Flemish bond.

Concentrating ornament at building entrances was a typical feature of the Spanish Baroque Revival style, as seen at the rear (west) entrance portal (above).

The Fieldhouse's exuberantly detailed entrance pavilion features an array of Spanish Baroque Revival-style details in terra cotta including twisted columns (top left) and sculptural figures (top right) including that of the seventeenth century French explorer Robert Cavelier de LaSalle. The scallop shell- and aquatic-themed ornament (right) was a common feature of Spanish Baroque architecture as symbols of St. James, the patron saint of Spain.

improvement program to the parks and boulevards on Chicago's West Side. The West Park Commissioners praised this building upon its completion:

> *The Administration Building will stand out as a great beauty spot in the West Parks System. It not alone provides headquarters for the Commissioners and department heads but is a boating and skaters' recreational building as well. The building is modern in every respect and will in the long run be the means of making for actual profit for the Park System through the possibility of having its affairs managed with dispatch, efficiency and economy.*

The building occupies a slightly elevated site on Central Park Avenue, the drive that separates Garfield Park's east and west lagoons. The building is also located on axis with Washington Boulevard, and its gold dome is a prominent visual feature for several blocks approaching the park from Central Park Avenue and Washington Boulevard. It soon became familiar to Chicagoans as the "Gold Dome Building" for its distinctive gold-leafed dome, which towers over the park and creates a dramatic visual landmark for the surrounding Garfield Park neighborhood.

The overall form of the two-story building consists of a square central pavilion flanked by symmetrical wings which bend back from the front (east) facade facing Central Park Avenue. The primary entrance at the east elevation is framed with an ornate entrance portal that extends the full height of the building. The entrance is reached by a formal staircase leading up to a raised terrace which surrounds the entire building. The central pavilion is topped with an octagonal brick drum bracketed by large terra-cotta scrolls. Located on top of this drum is the distinctive "Gold Dome," which at its highest point is 90 feet above ground and finished with gold leaf.

The exterior walls are clad in buff-colored face brick laid in a distinctive Flemish bond. Cream-colored ornamental terra cotta serves as trim as well as the very ornate center entrance ornamentation. The fenestration in each wing is symmetrically arranged. First-floor windows are set within brick arches and feature keystones that alternate with medallions on the front (east) and rear (west) elevations. Second-floor windows are situated directly below the cornice, which is topped by a brick parapet wall that hides the flat roofs of the two wings. The end pavilion of each wing has a moderately pitched hip roof covered with ceramic tiles. A tall brick chimney rises above the north wing.

Located at the east and west sides of the central pavilion, the entrance portals bristle with highly ornate glazed terra-cotta ornamentation, including twisted columns, sculptural figures, and a wild assortment of cartouches, scallop shells, scrolls, pinnacles, niches, and swirling, naturalistic plant forms. The entrance portals are examples of the "Churrigueresque" ornamentation, fantastically ornate and extensive Baroque decoration developed by the Churriguera family of architects and sculptors working in Spain in the late-1600s, typically to mark major entrances.

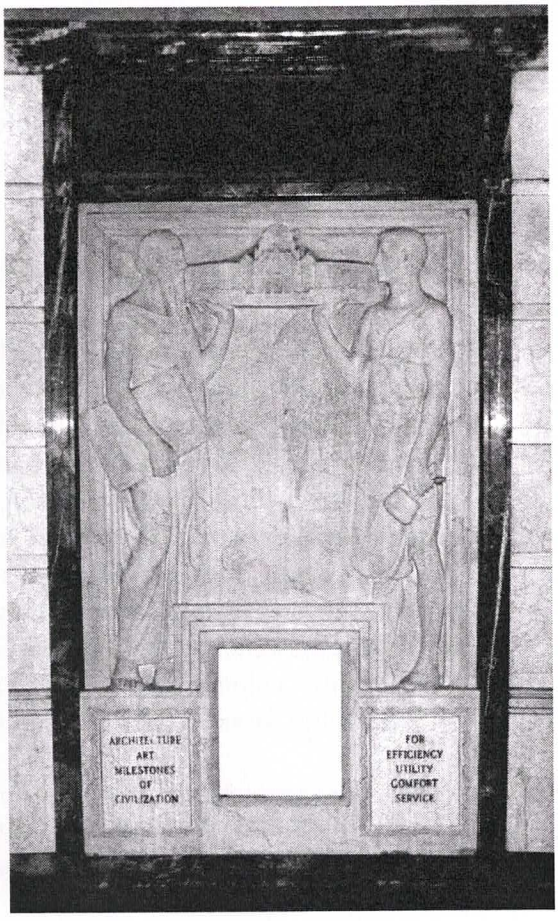
The front (east) entrance features tripled arched openings leading to a vestibule, and three windows above. A sculpted figure of seventeenth-century French explorer Robert Cavalier Sieur de LaSalle is situated above the large central window, which illuminates the second floor rotunda space. Portrait busts within circular niches are located above each of the two flanking windows, and the south bust is believed to be Christopher Columbus. The rear (west) entrance has a single-door opening paired with a large window, which is surrounded by the same type of rich ornamentation.

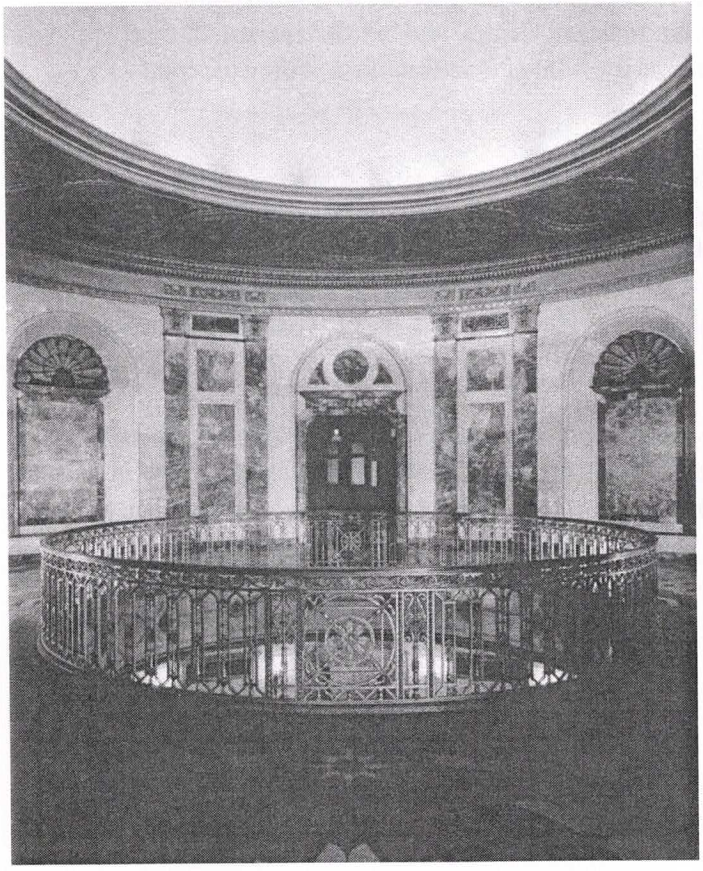
Both the front and rear doors of the entrance pavilion open into a dramatic two-story rotunda. This circular space—measuring 50 feet in diameter—features colorful, geometric-patterned terrazzo floors, marble-clad walls, a marble reception desk, a second-floor gallery, and a double-height domed ceiling. A noteworthy feature of the first floor of the rotunda is the series of sculptural panels by Richard W. Bock. Allegorical figures in low-relief terra cotta representing "Art and Architecture" are shown holding a model of the fieldhouse. Other panels are dedicated to Chicago's parks and playgrounds and the Illinois highway system. Bock was an Oak Park sculptor who collaborated with Frank Lloyd Wright on many of his early Prairie style commissions in Illinois, including the Heller House in Chicago (a designated Chicago Landmark), Wright's architectural studio in Oak Park, and the Dana-Thomas House in Springfield.

At the second floor level the rotunda contains an open gallery surrounded by a metal railing. The gallery is reached by a pair of marble of stairs flanking the doors leading to the west terrace. The buff-colored marble walls on the gallery level are enhanced by Corinthian pilasters and niches, both executed in richly veined gray marble. The domed ceiling is ringed by a soffit with an abundance of plaster ornamentation with graceful lines and naturalistic motifs.

The Administration Building's two wings originally housed the West Park Commission's administrative offices, engineering department and police force. The north wing also included the first-floor Commissioner's Board Room and a second-floor Public Hearing Room with a capacity for 450 people. After the West Park Commission became part of the newly created Chicago Park District in 1934, the Administration Building was designated a fieldhouse, and its larger spaces used for recreational purposes. The building's basement level—which directly accessed the west lagoon through a series of arched openings—historically featured a warming room and refreshment booth for skaters on the adjacent lagoon. The basement also included storage for pleasure boats, a garage for department heads, a large squad room for the West Park Police Force and cells for prisoners. The south wing later contained the Chicago Park District's Health Center.

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse has been recognized for its architectural significance. It is identified in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing feature in the Garfield Park district. The building is also included in the *AIA Guide to Chicago*, and was rated "orange" and identified as significant in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. Today, the Garfield Park Fieldhouse contains the Chicago Park District's Central Regional Offices. The building continues to be used for recreational uses, and includes a dance studio, gallery space, a boxing ring, and a theatre with stage. In 1983 a gymnasium structure with an outdoor pool on top was





The Fieldhouse interior has a dramatic two-story rotunda, featuring colorful patterned terrazzo floors, buff-colored marble walls, and gray marble Corinthian pilasters. The second-floor gallery (left) is topped with a domed ceiling with an ornamental plaster soffit. Four sculpted terra-cotta panels (top right) were created by noted artist Richard W. Bock. The above panel, dedicated to "Art and Architecture," depicts an architect and a sculptor holding a model of the Garfield Park Fieldhouse.

erected in the west lagoon. This structure adjoins the basement level of the Fieldhouse and rises to the height of its first-floor terrace.

The Spanish Baroque Revival

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse is an excellent example of the Spanish Baroque Revival architectural style, rarely used for Chicago buildings in general and especially park buildings in particular. Baroque art and architecture flourished in Spain between 1650 and 1750 through the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church which embraced dazzling architecture and fine arts to counter the effects of the Reformation. The most exuberantly ornamental phase of the Spanish Baroque was named after the Churriguera family, who worked mainly around Salamanca, Spain. The term "Churrigueresque" denotes the visually frenetic, twisting, and lavishly sculptural ornamentation that began to characterize much Spanish architecture by the end of the seventeenth century. Typical Churrigueresque ornamental features include the twisted or "Salomonic" column, the use of the 'estipite' shape which is an inverted obelisk or cone, and forms from the Classical style of architecture.

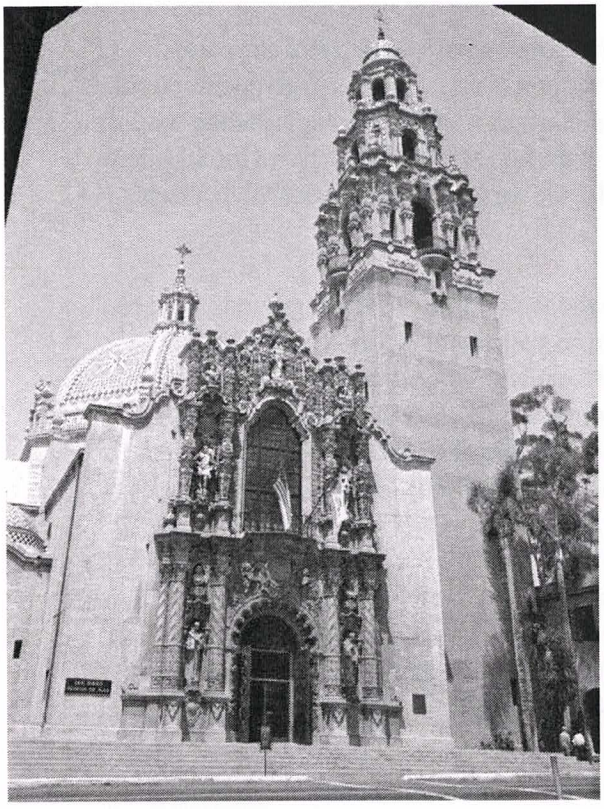
Spanish Baroque architecture was transplanted across the Atlantic to Spain's colonies in Central and South America in the eighteenth century. Elements of the style can also be seen in the relatively plain mission churches constructed in the American southwest, which was at the time at the fringes of Spain's colonial empire. The missions typically featured plain, stucco-clad walls, twin bell towers, clay-tile roofs, and, occasionally, a sculpturally decorated entrance portal. Compared to the Spanish Baroque churches of Central and South America, the comparatively plain mission churches represent the frontier manifestations of the exuberant baroque style.

It was at the Panama-California Exposition, held in San Diego in 1915, that the Spanish Baroque style was revived by architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, a nationally prominent architect who had previously authored a detailed study of Spanish Colonial architecture. The versatile Goodhue was also a proponent of the Gothic Revival movement, designing such ecclesiastical buildings as Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago (completed 1928 and a designated Chicago Landmark).

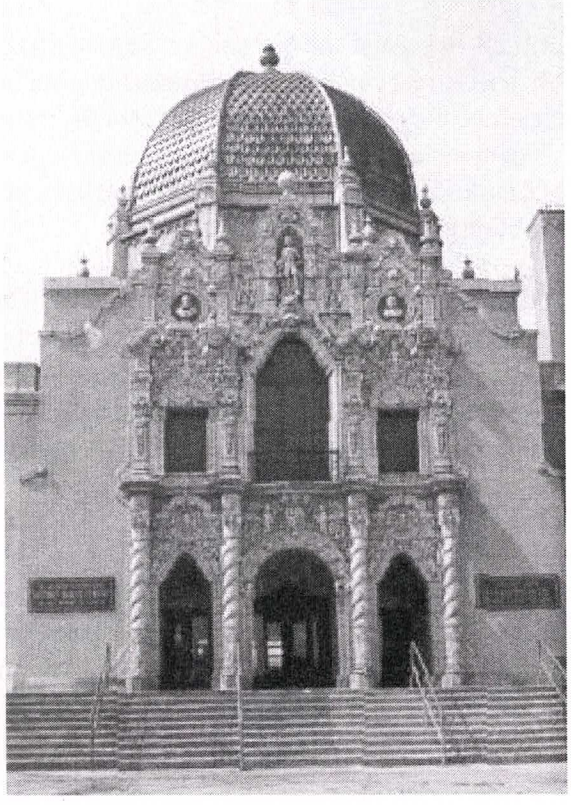
At the Panama-California Exposition, Goodhue wanted to go beyond the then-popular Mission Style of architecture and emphasize the richer veins of Spanish Baroque architecture found in the colonial churches of Central and South America. The exposition generated wide publicity, and inspired fashionable architects to look at both the elaborate churches of Mexico and buildings in Spain itself for source material, where they found a rich variety of architectural precedents. Michaelsen and Rognstad's design for the Garfield Park Fieldhouse is most probably inspired by Bertram Goodhue's designs for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, particularly the California State Building.

The Church of Santa Prisca in Taxco, México (left) from 1750 is an excellent example of the transplantation of Baroque architecture and Churrigueresque ornament from Spain to its colonies in the New World.

In his design for the California State Building (bottom left) as well as the other buildings at the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in 1915, Bertram Goodhue revived interest in Spanish Baroque architecture.



The entrance pavilion and dome of the Garfield Park Fieldhouse (bottom right) reflect the broad influence of the Spanish Baroque Revival Style a decade after the Panama-California Exposition had closed.



The revival of the Spanish Baroque in early-twentieth century America was characterized by the use of applied terra cotta ornament which was readily adaptable to the extravagant ornament of the style. As at the Garfield Park Fieldhouse, vigorous ornamentation tends to be concentrated at the entrance portal and carries upward the full height of the building to enframe a large focal window. The Spanish Baroque Revival style reached its greatest popularity during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly for the large movie palaces of the period like the Uptown Theatre from 1925 (a designated Chicago Landmark). Like many revival styles of architecture, the Spanish Baroque fell out of fashion in the post-War period.

Architects Michaelsen And Rognstad

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse was designed by the architectural firm of Michaelsen and Rognstad, a significant architectural firm in the history of Chicago. **Christian S. Michaelsen (1888-1960)** was born in Chicago, the son of a building contractor of Norwegian descent. He attended the public schools and received his first training in the building trades working with his father. In 1905 he began training as a draftsman in the office of Arthur Huen, and then from 1910 to 1913 worked for Chicago's most prolific "society architect," Howard Van Doren Shaw. While in Shaw's employ, Michaelsen's previous experience in construction led him to work in the area of structural engineering for the office.

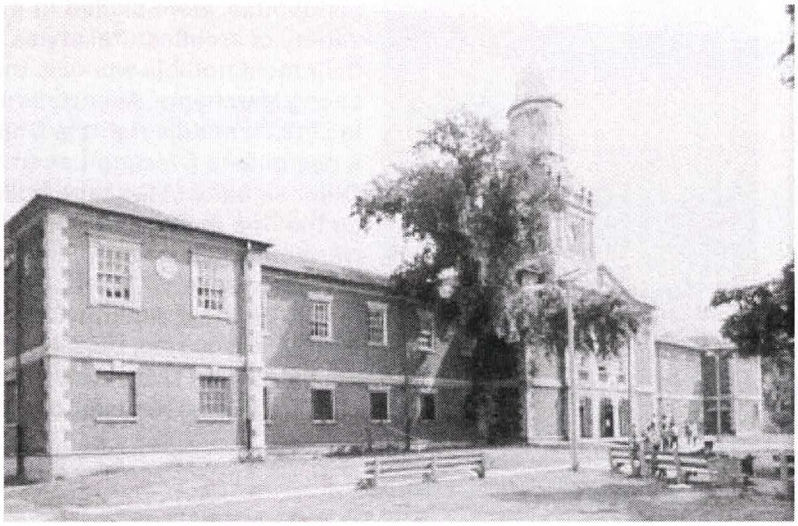
Sigurd Anton Rognstad (1892-1937) was born in Chicago of Norwegian immigrant parents. From the age of eighteen, Rognstad worked as a free-lance draftsman, and in 1915 he joined architect Frederick W. Perkins as a designer and draftsman.

In 1920, Rognstad and Michaelsen formed a partnership that would last seventeen years. Michaelsen provided expertise in structural engineering and oversaw the business operations of the office; Rognstad was responsible for the interior and exterior stylistic designs of their work. Their association ended with the death of Rognstad at the age of 46 in 1937. With the addition of Charles Rabig and Albert Ramp as partners in 1940, the firm continued under Michaelsen's direction until his death in 1960.

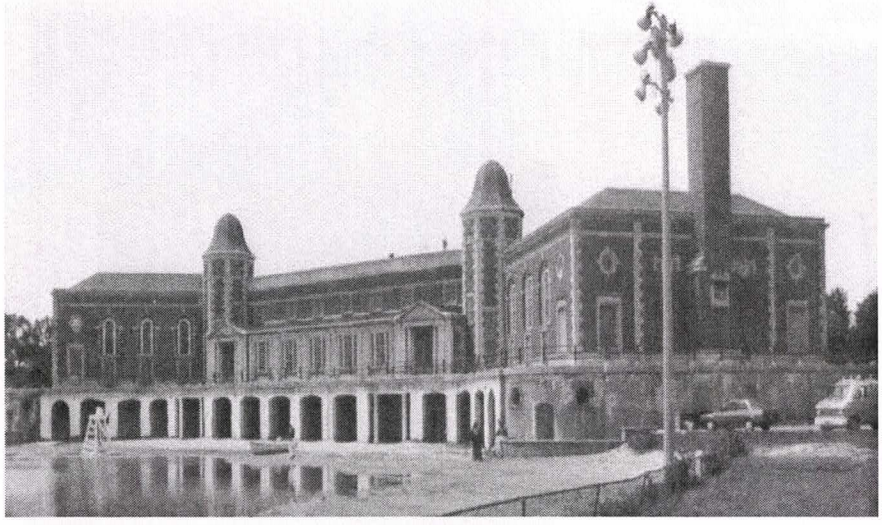
Although Michaelsen and Rognstad came from immigrant working-class backgrounds, both had served apprenticeships with prominent architects who specialized in Beaux Arts residential designs for an upper-class clientele. Michaelsen and Rognstad had neither the educational credentials nor the social connections necessary to compete with their teachers in pursuit of similar commissions from the elite. In order to follow their mutual inclination toward monumental designs in historic styles, they concentrated their efforts on large-scale public-works and commercial projects.

Michaelsen and Rognstad served as the architects for the West Park Commission from 1927 to 1929. While brief, this period was an especially productive one in the history of the West Park Commission, as the agency embarked upon an ambitious building program in its parks, thanks to the passage of a $10 million bond issue in 1927. In addition to the Administration Building in

Architects Christian Michaelsen (top left) and Sigurd Rognstad (top right), the architects for the Garfield Park Fieldhouse, were skilled in a wide variety of architectural styles. One of their most notable works is the On Leong Merchants' Association Building (1928, middle right) in Chinatown, a designated Chicago Landmark. Other significant Chicago buildings by the firm include the former Northside Auditorium Building (1928, bottom right) at 3730 N. Clark and the former Midwest Athletic Club Building, located across the street from Garfield Park (1926, middle left, listed on the National Register of Historic Places).



In addition to the Garfield Park Fieldhouse, Michaelsen and Rognstad designed a number of other Chicago park buildings during the 1920s, including distinctive fieldhouses for Austin (top), LaFollete (middle), and Douglas (bottom) parks.



Garfield Park, the firm produced 11 other distinctive buildings for the West Park Commission, including fieldhouses for both Humboldt and LaFollette Parks. The West Park Commissioners praised the firm in 1928:

> *for its originality of design and wonderful conception of execution to the last finality, as is evidenced by the work it has accomplished for the West Chicago Park System and in other conspicuous and artistic structures it has designed in various parts of the city and elsewhere*

Michaelsen and Rognstad also undertook the remodeling of several Chinatown restaurants in a "Chinese" style during the 1920s, as well as the design of the On Leong Merchants Association Building (2216 South Wentworth, built 1928; designated a Chicago Landmark). Other notable Chicago buildings by the firm include the former Northside Auditorium Building (3730 N. Clark, built 1928, now known as the Metro), the Austin Town Hall Park Fieldhouse (5626 W. Lake Street, built 1929, listed on the National Register of Historic Places), and the former Midwest Athletic Club Building, located across the street from Garfield Park (3800 W. Madison, built 1926, also listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-620 and –630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Garfield Park Fieldhouse be designated a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Garfield Park Fieldhouse exemplifies the importance of Chicago's large-scale "pastoral" parks to the city's heritage. Built for passive recreation and to encourage nearby real estate development, the City's five large nineteenth century parks—Lincoln, Humboldt, Garfield, Douglas, Washington, and Jackson—were designed as pleasure grounds for residents to relax and escape from the tensions of the crowded city. The West Park Administration Building's conversion to a fieldhouse after 1934 reflects the changing cultural attitudes towards the role of parks in Chicago in the early-twentieth century, as attention focused on creating landscapes that encouraged more active recreational uses.

- Built in 1928 as the headquarters for the West Park Commission, the Garfield Park Fieldhouse represents a period in Chicago's history when the City's parks were managed by nearly two dozen separate park commissions before they were consolidated by the 1934 creation of the Chicago Park District.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Garfield Park Fieldhouse is an exceptional example of the Spanish Baroque Revival style, which is rare in the context of Chicago architectural history as well as the Chicago Park District.

- The Fieldhouse is an exceptional example of the Spanish Baroque Revival style, with such characteristic features as the entrance bay richly ornamented with twisted columns, portrait busts and sculptures, and a wild assortment or cartouches, scallop shells, scrolls, pinnacles, niches, and swirling, naturalistic plant forms.

- The Fieldhouse—with its central pavilion and exuberant Churrigueresque entrances, immense gold leaf dome, and flanking rectangular wings—exhibits excellent craftsmanship in materials and detailing, using molded brick and terra cotta to create both Spanish Baroque and Classical-style ornament.

- The Fieldhouse interior has a dramatic two-story rotunda, featuring colorful patterned terrazzo floors, buff-colored marble walls, gray marble Corinthian pilasters, and terra-cotta panels sculpted by noted artist Richard W. Bock.

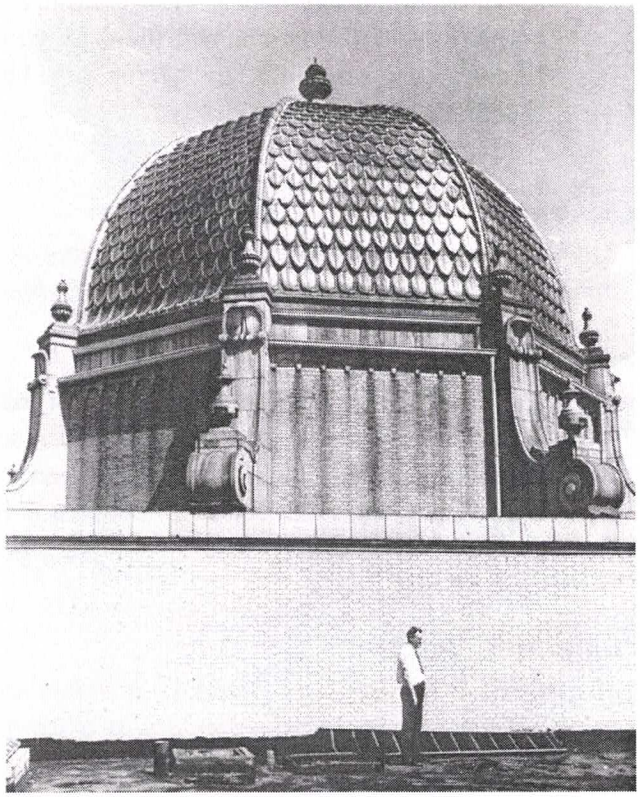
Criterion 5: Important Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Michaelsen and Rognstad served as the architects for the West Park Commission from 1927 to 1929, a brief but especially productive period in the history of Chicago's west parks. During this time, the firm produced 12 distinctive park buildings as part of an ambitious $10 million improvement program for the parks and boulevards on Chicago's West Side, including the Garfield Park Administration Building and fieldhouses for both Humboldt and Douglas Parks.

- During the 1920s Michaelsen and Rognstad also designed other significant Chicago buildings such as the On Leong Merchants Association Building (2216 S. Wentworth; designated a Chicago Landmark), the former Northside Auditorium Building (3730 N. Clark) and the former Midwest Athletic Club Building (3800 W. Madison).

Known to thousands of Chicagoans as the "Gold Dome Building," the Garfield Park Fieldhouse is a distinctive presence in Garfield Park and the West Side. Its location adjoining the west lagoon has historically served as a scenic backdrop for skaters in the winter (bottom) and boaters in the summer.



- The sculptural panels in the Garfield Park Fieldhouse are the work of Richard W. Bock, a significant Chicago-born and European-trained artisan and sculptor who is best known for his collaboration with Frank Lloyd Wright on the Dana-Tomas, Heller, and Martin Houses, as well as Unity Temple, the Larkin Building, Wright's Oak Park Studio, and the Midway Gardens.

Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.

- The Garfield Park Fieldhouse, on axis with both Central Park Avenue and Washington Boulevard, is a dramatic visual landmark for the surrounding Garfield Park neighborhood and Chicago's West Side; and is known to Chicagoans throughout the city as the "Gold Dome Building" for its monumental gold-leaf dome, particularly prominent in Garfield Park.

Integrity Criteria

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic value.

The Garfield Park Fieldhouse has excellent integrity, retaining its original siting, physical relationship with the surrounding Garfield Park landscape, and the vast majority of its exterior physical features. Its front (east) elevation and flanking wings are virtually unchanged from their original appearance. In 1994 the Fieldhouse underwent a restoration project that included reconstructing and re-gilding the dome. New sconces that replicate the originals were also installed in the rotunda at that time. At the time of this report, the Chicago Park District is undertaking additional exterior repairs to the building.

Changes include the removal of two small domes at each corner of the east side of the central entrance pavilion. The building's original wood casement windows have been replaced with aluminum casement windows. In 1983, a gymnasium structure with an outdoor pool was constructed in the west lagoon at the back of the building. The low structure adjoins the fieldhouse's basement level, and does not affect the visual dominance of the original building.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the

public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the Garfield Park Fieldhouse, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; including the raised terrace, which wraps around the building, and its stairways and balustrade; and
- the two-story interior rotunda, including the public spaces that open onto the rotunda, such as niches, the two stairways and stair landings, window bays, and adjoining corridors; the glass-and-ornamental-metal interior entrance vestibule; and the domed ceiling.

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Chicago Park District archives: pp 5, 7, 9 (top), 13 (bottom left), 15 (bottom right), 17 (top right and left), 21.

"Templo de Santa Prisca de Taxco," Wikipedia: p. 15 (top).

Historic American Buildings Survey (Library of Congress): p. 15 (bottom), HABS CAL,37-SANDI,16-A-2. California Tower, Balboa Park, El Prado Area, San Diego, San Diego County, CA.

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose ten members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Zoning and Land Use Planning, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-2958) TTY; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, http:www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks.

This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the City Council's final landmark designation ordinance should be regarded as final.